

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the above-identified application in view of the present amendment is respectfully requested.

The Specification has been amended to correct minor informalities. Claim 3 has been objected to for a minor informality. Claim 3 has been amended to correct the minor informality.

Claims 1, 3-5, and 7 have been rejected as anticipated by Kawaguchi et al., 4,772,045. Claims 2, 6, and 8 have been rejected as unpatentable over Kawaguchi et al. in view of Yoshimura et al., US 5,588,674. Claims 9 and 10 have been indicated as containing allowable subject matter. Claim 8 has been canceled without prejudice.

Amended claim 1 recites the flap guiding deployment of the protection device over and past the head of the vehicle occupant and the flap preventing the protection device from directly engaging the head of the vehicle occupant (Specification, page 7, lines 10-13). Both Kawaguchi et al. and Yoshimura et al. disclose air bags that inflate toward the head of a vehicle occupant, not over and past the head.

Amended claim 1 further recites the flap having a first end portion and an opposite second end portion, the first end portion of the flap being fixed relative to the protection device and the second end portion of the flap not being fixed relative to the protection device (canceled claim 8). The Office Action states that it would have been obvious to modify the skin (18) of Kawaguchi et al. to not be sewn to the air bag (14) to facilitate smooth deployment of the air bag

(Office Action, page 5, para. 6). However, the skin (18) of Kawaguchi et al. already provides smooth deployment of the air bag (14). Thus, this motivation is inappropriate for this modification.

Amended claim 1 additionally recites the protection device sliding along the flap during inflation of the protection device (Specification, page 14, lines 8-12). Kawaguchi et al., Yoshimura et al., and the other art of record do not disclose an apparatus with a protection device sliding along a flap during inflation of the protection device.

Amended claim 1 furthermore recites the flap being deployed by inflation of the protection device into a position engaging and covering a head of a vehicle occupant with the second end portion of the flap located over and past the head the vehicle occupant (Specification, page 8, lines 3-5). Neither the skin (18) of Kawaguchi et al., nor the intervening cloth (300) of Yoshimura et al. are located over and past the head of a vehicle occupant.

Claim 4 recites a first major side surface of the flap facing the occupant and having a higher coefficient of friction than a second major side surface of the flap facing the protection device. The Office Action states that the chamois skin of Kawaguchi et al. has sides with differing coefficients of friction and that Col. 2, line 8-11 of Kawaguchi et al. discloses that the side with lesser friction coefficient faces the occupant. Firstly, a chamois skin does not necessarily have sides with differing coefficients of

friction. Secondly, Kawaguchi et al. nowhere distinguishes which side of the chamois skin faces the occupant and which side faces the air bag.

Claim 6 recites the flap is folded separately from and overlying the protection device when in the stored, deflated condition. Figure 4 of Yoshimura et al. does not disclose a flap folded separately from the air bag.

Claim 7 recites the flap being folded with the protection device when in the stored, deflated condition. Kawaguchi et al. does not disclose how or if the skin (18) is folded when the air bag is in the stored condition.

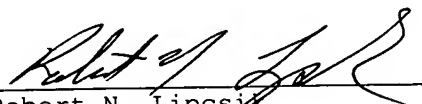
Claim 1, as well as claims 2-7 which depend from claim 1, are in condition for allowance.

Claims 9 and 10, indicated as containing allowable subject matter, have been amended to stand independently. Claims 9 and 10 are in condition for allowance.

In view of the foregoing, allowance of the above-identified application is respectfully requested.

Please charge any deficiency or credit any overpayment in the fees for this amendment to our Deposit Account No. 20-0090.

Respectfully submitted,


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